

House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee

February 1, 2011

Good Morning

I am Rick Winn, Managing Director for Amway Hotel Corporation

I am here as well, to testify in support of House Bill 4160

We own and operate 3 Hotels in Grand Rapids; the Amway Grand Plaza, the JW Marriott and Courtyard by Marriott. We employ approximately 1100 associates.

As we know, Michigan is not a drive through state, such as Indiana, Ohio, and many others.

Therefore, to attract out of state visitors, we must provide a reason for them to come....provide a "Brand" which would appeal to them as a destination. In many respects, we need to change the perception of potential travelers to the state.

Pure Michigan has begun that change, and the results of 2010 are proof that providing brand recognition can lead to more business.

I can offer a few statistics that show how the Pure Michigan campaign has affected West Michigan.

- 1) First would be the recent report issued by Experience Grand Rapids, our convention and visitors bureau, which stated: " Kent County hotels increased occupancy and revenue per available hotel room by a record 11 percent, compared to national growth averages of 5.7 percent in occupancy, 5.5 percent in revenue per available room and 7.6 percent in total room revenue. The fact that we so predominately outpaced the national growth averages in all areas proves our marketing and brand qualities are being recognized on a regional and national level... Solid convention business attendance, extremely high interest from leisure travelers, new hotel inventory and enhanced brand recognition all played a part...."
- 2) Second are the 2010 attendance statistics from Meijer Gardens which in recent years, has averaged approximately a half million visitors annually. However, in Fiscal Year 2010, attendance rates surpassed the previous record set in 2005, by 17 percent. During the summer months, the Chihuly exhibit attracted guests across North America and 44 of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii....
- 3) ArtPrize is the third example. The three weeks' attendance was estimated at 250,000 of which 6% was estimated to be out of state visitors who added an additional 3,000 room nights to the city over the three week period.

These are just three examples, but success tends to breed more success, only if the “would be” customers can hear the message and be lured by the “Brand”this is where Pure Michigan comes in.

We are seeing the tangible results of the branding efforts of Pure Michigan. It may be easier to recognize and understand how a campaign such as this can affect and improve the leisure market, however, the convention market (outside of the state groups we service) is arguably the most dependent upon the perception that they (the meeting planner) have on the destination they are choosing.

With continued ad campaigns to further reach and impress the out of state public, these are the gains we will continue to see in our largest potential growth market.

For once we get them in to see what (in our case) West Michigan has to offer, we can sell them.

We need Pure Michigan to help us get them here.

We are confident that passage of HB 4160 will do just that, and will grow tourism jobs and generate tax revenues for the state.

Thank you for your time.